

HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF DU QUOIN
ILLINOIS

BEING
A CENTENNIAL SERMON DELIVERED
JULY 2, 1876

BY
REV. EDWARD F. FISH, THE PASTOR

THE DU QUOIN TRIBUNE
THURSDAY JULY 13, 1876

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Rev. Fish

HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DU QUOIN ILLINOIS

A Centennial Sermon, delivered July 2nd.,
1876, by Rev. Edward F. Fish, the Pastor

Deut. viii: 2, "And thou shall remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee."

The Presbyterian church of Du Quoin was a colony from the church of what is now Old Du Quoin. That church was organized in part on the 15th. of November, 1840, by the Rev. B. A. Brown, and the organization was completed December 16th, 1842, by Rev. William Chamberlain. It was at first called the Church of Nine Mile Prairie, the name was changed in 1846 to Du Quoin, and in 1865 to Old Du Quoin.

When the Illinois Central Railway was opened and the local mines began to be worked at this point, many citizens removed from the village to the station which took the name of New Du Quoin. Some brought their dwellings with them. In consequence of such removal a new church was formed, embracing nine members who brought letters from the Old Du Quoin church, and one from the First Congregational church of Vernon, Conn. their names are as follows:

Alvah Sprague, Mary Sprague, Harriet E. Keyes, George S. Smith, Edwin N. Smith, Juliana Smith, Sarah Smith, Lucius B. Skinner, Jane Smith. The member from the Congregational church of Vernon, Con., was Jane Hunt, now Mrs. Benjamin Sprague. The organization was effected by the Rev. Joseph Gordon, then acting as missionary of the Alton Presbytery, on Sabbath, Sept. 14, 1856, and George S. Smith was elected and duly ordained and installed as Ruling Elder.

The name given to the organization was, "The New Du Quoin First Presbyterian Church", which is still the legal title. The meeting for organization was held in the school house, a small frame building that stood where the city school building now is. Public worship continued to be held in the same place for a year and a half. The church was received under the care of Alton Presbytery on September 26, 1856.

On the 1st of November of the same year, Rev. W. S. Post, then residing at Jonesboro, began to labor as the stated supply of this church for one-half time, the other half being spent with the church at Carbondale. Each church raised for his support \$100, and the remaining \$300 of his salary was supplied by the American Home Missionary Society. Mr. Post continued to preach here one-half the time for five years, up to November 1861.

Within a year after the church was organized, measures were taken for the erection of a house of worship, and the edifice, built at a cost of about \$2,500, was dedicated on Sabbath, April 25, 1858.

Of the sum named, \$500 was a loan from the church Erection Fund which was afterwards -- in 1869 repaid in full with interest.

The two lots upon which the building stands were donated for the purpose by Messrs. Keyes and Metcalf, the founders of the town.

There were present at the dedication besides Mr. Post, the Revs. Joseph Gordon, Thomas Lippincott, and Robert Stewart, the last of whom preached the sermon.

Before the year was out the temporary pulpit and seats which had been used at first were replaced with permanent ones, and \$67 had been raised for the purchase of blinds.

From the organization up to April 20, 1859, there had been added to the church on profession 11, on certificate 13, making the whole number 34. The contributions for the year had been \$26. The next year there were 15 additions on profession and 9 on certificate, making a total membership of 56 on the 1st of April 1860.

During the nearly twenty years of it's existence, this church has enjoyed the stated labors of nine ministers of the gospel, as follows:

1. Rev. W. S. Post for five years from November 1856 to November 1861.
2. Rev. Thomas Lippincott for six months, from November 1861 to May 1862. Both these preached here one-half the time.
3. Rev. Yates Hickey was elected pastor in the summer of 1862, and at first accepted, but afterwards recalled his acceptance, and left at the end of three months.
4. Rev. James Stafford supplied the pulpit--irregularly--from August 1862 to April 1864.
5. Rev. J. J. Ward labored here from April 1864 to April 1865.
6. Rev. Joseph D. Barstow preached for two years, from November 1865 to November 1867.
7. Rev. Josiah Wood supplied the pulpit from November 1867 to May 1868--six months.
8. Rev. Peter S. Van Nest commenced his labors May 1st, 1868, and remained three years and three months, up to August, 1871. The church gave him a call to become their pastor, but while it was under advisement the health of his wife became so much impaired that he left, quite unexpectedly, for a more northern climate.
9. Your present pastor, Rev. Edward F. Fish, began his labors here as stated supply, November 26, 1871. Was installed pastor, December 15, 1872.

Of the ministers above mentioned, Mr. Lippincott, Mr. Stafford, and Mr. Wood had deceased. All the others are still living.

Mr. Post is pastor of the Baptist church in Belleville, in this State.

Mr. Hickey resides at Washington, Pa., and is laboring as an agent.

Mr. Ward is laboring as stated supply of the churches of Kasson and Dodge Center, Minnesota.

Mr. Barstow resides among us and is at present without charge.

Mr. Van Nest is pastor of the Congregational church of Burlington, Wisconsin.

Of the ministers who have served this church, none were born in Illinois. Mr. Lippincott and Mr. Ward were natives of New Jersey, Mr. Hickey, and Fish of New York.

Five of the Number were college graduates-- Union, Hanover, and Wabash having each one representative, and Hamilton two.

One studied theology at Auburn Seminary and four at Lane.

The church has not yet furnished a man for the ministry of the gospel.

ELDERS

The list of Ruling Elders is as follows: George S. Smith, chosen September 14, 1856; Dr. Lewis Dyer, Moses H. Ross, Chosen August 14, 1858; Russell Tuthill, George M. Hinckley, Reuben Berrey, Chosen January 6, 1867. The present elders are George S. Smith and George M. Hinckley.

REVIVALS

The first season of special religious interest enjoyed by the church, was in February 1860, when Rev. Joseph S. Edwards of Centralia spent twelve days here, holding prayer and inquiry meetings, and preaching in the evening, as the result of which six persons were added to the church on the 19th of February, and six more on the first of April.

In June, 1867, a series of evening meetings, commencing with the week of prayer, and continued about three weeks, resulted in the hopeful conversion of ten or twelve persons. Mr. Barstow, the minister, was assisted by Rev. Elijah Buch, of Centralia, a part of the time.

Under the ministry of Mr. Van Nest, the growth of the church was nearly 50 percent, but there is no record of a revival.

During the last winter (1875-1876) this church with the other Evangelical churches in the city enjoyed a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Many Christians were greatly revived, and fifteen or more persons of this congregation were hopefully converted to Christ, the most of whom have since made a public profession of their faith.

The church edifice has twice undergone repairs. In 1864 the ladies of the congregation raised about \$200 and added liberally of their own labor for the complete renovation of the house.

In the summer of 1871, the building was put in thorough repair and a addition of twenty feet made to it's length, and a furnace placed in the cellar, the whole costing about \$2,000.

The parsonage was left to the church by legacy of Mrs. Sarah Root, who departed this life in 1867.

The whole number of members who have been connected with the church in 216.

Of these, there were received by letter, 140. By profession, 76. removed by death, 24. Dismissed, 74. Dropped from the roll, 24. Present membership, 94.

Total amount of contribution for objects of benevolence, \$2,212.50. Being a yearly average of \$110.625.

A review of the history of this church suggests the following remarks:

1. It is worthy of notice that a church starting with only ten members, and never as yet reporting quite one hundred, has enjoyed the stated preaching of the work of God with so little interruption. Within six weeks after the church was organized, it had secured a minister to preach every other Sabbath. At the end of Mr. Lippincott's engagement there was an interval of a month before Mr. Hickey came, after Mr. Ward left an interval of 8 months before Mr. Barstow came, and after Mr. Van Nest left another interval of four months. But in the last instance the house was undergoing repairs. With these exception, the summons of the church bell has been sounded almost every Sabbath day calling the people to the worship of God.

For this result we have to render thanks, first of all to the Lord our God, who has so constantly kept a light upon this golden candlestick, and then to the faithful men and women, who have felt and acted upon the conviction that the stated preaching of the Gospel was a blessing indispensable to themselves and their children, and the holding forth of the work of life before the world a privilege which they could not forego.

2. Another characteristic feature of the history of this church is that the salary of the minister has always been promptly and fully paid. Few small churches, I believe, have so fair a record in this respect. How many heartaches have thus been spared to the ministers and their families, only the record kept on high can tell. It will all be known some day. Meanwhile let us put it into the history for the benefit of the generations that are to come after us.

3. One element of the prosperity of this church has been the fact that the men and women who controlled it's affairs, and gave it character, have understood, trusted and loved each other. I am touching a matter too delicate and sacred to be dwelt upon at length. But I may be allowed to illustrate my meaning by an incident. When we all tarried after the usual service, one Sabbath morning in May, 1875, to say a word of farewell to our well beloved friends, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin

which neither we nor they will soon forget, I ween--one of the brethren took me by the hand in the aisle and said, "this day is the 36th. anniversary of the first Sabbath that Mr. Sprague and I spent in Illinois." They had come down the Ohio river on a flat-boat together, and reached Old Du Quoin in May, 1839.

With many changes, the church has to a remarkable degree retained its identity in membership. Six of the ten original members are still with us.

4. The history of this church illustrated God's faithfulness.

There has been no great revival in our history, no very large ingathering at any one time. The largest number reported as added on profession in one year was in 1860--fifteen. The largest number ever added at one time was in January last, nineteen, of whom only twelve were received on profession of faith.

The average annual increase has been, on profession, 3.8; on certificate 6.5; total 10.3. The above is the gross averaged increase. The net average annual gain has been only 4.5. Less than four conversions a year for these twenty years. And it is right for me to say that the average of the four and a half years of my own ministry has been the same as for the previous fifteen.

While such a summary of our church work ought to cover our faces with the blush of shame, it shows at the same time, that God has not forgotten to be gracious. Though it has been small, there has been growth--a gradual gain, notwithstanding there have been so many deaths and removals.

Now plainly do these statistics repeat in our ears the works of the Master; "According to your faith be it unto you." Hitherto, our faith has been feeble we have been--I will not say, content with holding our own but--limiting our expectations and our endeavors. Why should we not, in the words of Carey, the Missionary, "expect great things," and "attempt great things." As I have already mentioned, the whole number added to the church on profession of faith up to the present time is 76. Seventy-six is just about the present number of our resident members. If now, every one of this number should immediately, with humble prayer, and earnest endeavor, undertake to win one soul to Christ, who doubts that before the end of this Centennial year, at least, seventy-six more new born souls would be enrolled as members of this church? What more acceptable thanks-offering can we bring to-day as a token of our gratitude for the mercies which we commemorate than the solemn resolve, adopted in our hearts and registered in heaven, "I will, God helping me, win at least one soul to Christ this year."

With such resolve, let us cross the limit of the out-going century and set our feet upon the threshold of the new.



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